

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

May 2011, Issue 208

Boarding Houses

A pleasant 70° day greeted the dozen-plus who came out for May's program: Bob and Marie Shaw, Dot Blenis, Allyn and Mary Shaw, Phyllis Beechert, David and Judy Rundell, Ron Golden, Stephanie Ingalls, Walter Ingalls, and Don Teator. (The pleasant week of weather following this date was followed by a week of drippy, gray weather!)

The program of the evening was Don's presentation of his initial documentation of the boarding house era in Greenville.

(For the technologically advanced, you will be pleased to know that I coordinated all the paraphernalia needed for the show: my son's digital projector, the library's screen, my wife's laptop computer, and the library's Internet service. All of this took as much planning as my end of it, although it will be easier the second time, I think!)

The evening started with two digital slide shows – one of the 32 pages of the 1937 Chamber of Commerce publication (Greenville in the Catskill Mountains), and the second of 25 aerial shots Debra had taken that day of Country Estates, Catskill Junkyard, Freehold west of the corners, and a few stray shots. We were like kids watching TV!

Then came the program.

The short of it is that I wished I had done this twenty years ago. But, I suspect all of us have said this more than once. So, the time is now, and I have given notice a couple times already.

This evening, I detailed my work. The web page (<http://www.dteator.com/zResort/resortweb.htm>) starts with reproductions of six different brochures, ranging from 1937 to 1990. One could spend a couple hours looking through these, especially the oldest three.

(An aside: at some point, I asked the audience to evaluate ease of use, interest level, ways of improving the presentation, etc. As you wander through the web site, keep those in mind, and feel free to give any feedback you wish – compliments, constructive criticism, more information, leads to more sources, etc.)

(Another aside: when we looked at Ingalside's page, the inclusion of a former guest's ten-page reminiscence was shown and serves as a reminder that detailed accounts from any perspective are welcome.)

Then comes the listing of about fifty establishments, each with text that was copied from the appropriate brochure. It is a long page.

Then, if available, comes a link (blue underlined text) that leads to a separate page, which is the content about each

separate establishment. For some, I have considerable information; for most I have little. If I have to limit my selection, I will try to select pictures and info that best portrays the boarding house.

At the top of each separate page is information – name, address, owners & dates of ownership, current status. On the side, I will eventually show a picture as it currently stands.

Beneath that heading is/will be a showing of photos and info that I have or have decided to show.

In the end, I hope to have this as a resource that anyone anytime can view and, I hope, react to and contribute to.

One of my concerns is the continuity of information. In 2011, everyone is using the internet (OK, so what if only four of us this evening have a computer with Internet at home!), and smart phones enable much more active information to be seen.

However, everyone reading this has seen more than one example of technology that was the everyday technology of that day but is no longer.

Debra and I used to duplicate photos with film and negatives. Today, it is the digital camera and scanner. The question of accessibility is vital.

My point is how to ensure that this documentation of the story of the boarding house era will be available in ten years, twenty-five years, or even a hundred years.

This concern is heightened by the disappearance of information. One hundred years ago, black and white photographs were taken, stored in photo albums, and looked at a hundred years later (let's hope the photographs were labeled!). At least, a physical copy exists.

Today, a photo is taken, is sent through the magic of waves and signals but may never have a physical copy. If the

'owner' of that photo 'disappears' or if the technology changes, that image may be gone forever.

I suspect a few of you have 78 LPs (not to mention 33s or 45s) at home but have no instrument to play them on. Some of you have an 8-track at home but no player. Even a ten year old cell phone qualifies for the antiquity market. (What did we do before push button car seat warmers?)

All of these last few paragraphs is a reminder to have a vision for preserving those things you want your grandchildren, and beyond, to read and see. Label photos. Give copies of what you have to the important people in your life.

So much for that sage advice.

The last event of the evening was Don's showing of different web sites that show Greenville, and there is a surprising amount of information out there. So, here's the list that the attendees saw.

townofgreenvillenyc.com – the town's governance, politics, and policies. Included are minutes; copies of permits, applications, and laws; town documents (comprehensive plan, etc.); and links to other town groups

communitypartnersofgreenville.com – the group that develops town's natural beauty and historic resources. Included are latest efforts (e.g., Greenville Beautification Project); info about town park; calendars and newsletter; and more links to the community.

gbeworks.com - Greenville Beautification Committee contains the efforts of this particular group (see preceding reference)

allartsmatter.org – the group that brings ‘culture’ to the town, usually in the former Presbyterian Church. Included are latest efforts.

greenville.lib.ny.us – so much information about resources and efforts of the library. One can even search for and reserve books.

greenville.k12.ny.us – a ton of information about the school. One could spend dozens of hours looking at everything here. Of particular interest to our group, the full copy of the History of the Greenville School District is available. (go to ‘district’, then ‘history’)

greenegovernment.com – information about Greene County governance and more.

rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nygreen2 – Sylvia Hasenkopf astounding efforts to record county history, genealogy, and more.

rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nygreen2/cemeteries_greenville – a small part of the preceding reference – this details the different cemeteries of the town, and also lists all the names in each cemetery

gchistory.org – Greene County Historical Society details their efforts.

mths.org – the Mountain Top Historical Society does a wonderful job with all aspects of moutaintop history

greene.sdgny.com – wow! Tax information about every parcel of land (owners, details of house, values, etc.) are here. If there are others, let me know.

By the time we wrapped up, the non-computer heads were spinning. At some not very far distant part of our lives, one would have to have an excellent memory about

sources, and have enough resources to travel to and make copies of desired information. Today, armed with the internet, the ‘libraries’ come to your home

The next meeting (June 13th) will be a share session. I think Allyn and Mary will bring a few old pieces to identify. If you can, bring something to share, or just come to enjoy and listen.

The meeting after that (**Wednesday**, July 13th) will be a joined meeting of the GLHG and the Civil War Round Table to recognize the influence of and interest in the Civil War. Mary Heisinger is doing most of the work for this one (thanks, Mary). One part will be a woman who re-enacts the role of Mary Todd Lincoln. I think we are also contemplating a section that talks about the influence that the Civil War had on small town life. Remember: our very first ever Wednesday evening meeting.

The Civil War Round Table’s upcoming meeting is June 8th (one of those times the second Wednesday comes before the second Monday), with the topic of the Monitor, as presented by Steve Muller. Community Room, 7:30 pm.

Walter Ingalls provided the program for a Rotary meeting in May – his 1947 trip across the country with his parents, and Merritt & Ruth Elliott. I was in attendance, as Walter’s guest, and it was fun! I may want Walter to do it for us.

Take care,



Dear Editor:

As I sat eating by breakfast and heard the first part of the Greenville Theater being razed I started to remince as how the Village of Greenville has changed in the past 60 years. I don't remember the Vanderbilt Theater (known by that name back then) being a church as that was a little before my time but I do remember how we teenagers made our debuts on that stage in musicals directed by actors from Albany. We were all sure we'd be in Hollywood some day.

Mary's Restaurant was a gas station for many years. The Pioneer Ins. Co. was a hotel-dance hall and also a home where the telephone office was located. The Mobil Station was an apartment house and also a small building where the Greenville Local was originated and printed there. It was purchased by the Ravena News-Herald and the office was in an apartment in Baumann's Store by Ralph Youmans.

Flack's barber shop was Wessel's Greenville Garage where my husband got his start as a mechanic. Next door to the theatre was where the original Greenville Fire Dept. was originated then moved to the building next to Main Street Garage, then to its present location which housed the Greenville Fan Store owned by Pieree W. Stevens.

The Public Library was good ole Greenville Fire Academy and there was an annex added which is now located in Norton Hill - The Blue Inn. On the corner across from Pioneer was a grocery store - later used for 7th and 8th grade students and then purchased by Al Volckmann and became an IGH store.

Grossman's Ins. agency was a barber shop with beauty shop in the back - then became Flack's Bakery for many years. The Ceramic Shop was a drug store for many years. The Masonic building was a grocery store. The Village Inn was an ice cream-candy store and also housed a pool room. Later on it became a restaurant.

BMB supply was Steven's Hardware Store for many long years with the Post Office being located where it is now.

GREENVILLE LOCAL

THURSDAY, JULY 15, 1982

The town building was located in front of the Main Street Garage also next door was a vegetable market. Both have long been torn down, purchased by Main St. Garage for frontage. A meat market owned by Joseph Smith was next door where the fur dept. was. Dale Dorner law office was a barber shop.

Our house on Main Street was a dentist office originally with a Dr. Smith the dentist. We still find teeth in our back yard sometime. The Coxsackie bank was the home of the Charles Roe family. The Greenville Arms was the Vanderbilt estate.

The only original landmark that I can remember still with the same business is the Cunningham Funeral Home. At that time I remember my Dad used to tell us how he worked for Mr. Cunningham and drove a horse and wagon to Coxsackie to pick up caskets, flour and sugar. Then he started the first Taxi service in Greenville.

Even the streets have been changed when the state put the new route 81 in. I hope I haven't bored you but it sure was fun just to remember the changes that have taken place, for the better, I hope. It sure was a busy little town.

Evelyn A. Simpson

BMB supply store